

**PROJECT SUMMARY****2****Project Title:** Mariposa County Chipping Program**Project Cost:** \$115,787.00 (\$147,287.00 including \$31,500.00 In-Kind Match)

**Project Summary:** Wildland fire is the number one natural disaster that threatens the lives and property of residents and visitors, as well as our resources including the vast and important watersheds of Mariposa County.

This Chipping Program is designed to complete the residential fuel hazard reduction process by providing chipping services so that all of the cut and or limbed wildland fuel can be reduced to a non fire carrying component that is vital to the reduction of disastrous fires and instrumental in watershed protection, as the chips will be redistributed onto the soil for a very vital source of soil erosion protection.

The Chipping Program will include an aggressive community outreach and education component designed to educate developers, homeowners, citizen groups and visitors to the concepts of watershed protection, fire prevention, fuels management, fire management and natural resource conservation education.

When a wildfire occurs, firefighters must act first to protect lives, then property, before they can focus on wildland protection and fire suppression. If all residents in the County have done everything they can at home and in their neighborhoods to protect themselves from wildfires, this frees firefighters to concentrate their efforts on protecting our precious resources, both natural and manmade. Among these resources are our National Forests and National Parks, our watershed, wildlife habitat, and sites with cultural and historical significance.

Among the most important things residents can do to prepare themselves for wildfire is to create and maintain a "defensible space" around their homes and other structures. This Chipping Program is designed to complete that process and educate and assist residents in reducing the risk of losing their homes, property, and even their lives to wildfire, while encouraging them to practice proper conservation of historical, archaeological, natural resource and watershed values.

The Chipping Program will give the Council the opportunity to raise awareness in each community and get residents and visitors focused on fire safe and conservation issues. Residents will cut brush around structures and along driveways and routes of ingress/egress, and pile cut material within 10 foot easement along existing roads and driveways prior to our arrival. We will provide an education and brush chipping crew, a chipper and tow vehicle, and all necessary insurance and equipment maintenance. We will educate residents about creating "defensible space" around their homes and structures as well as along roadsides to ensure safe ingress/egress in the event of a fire. We will motivate residents to clear on their property around structures and along their ingress/egress routes and assist them by chipping cut materials. Chipped material will be left in piles for future use as mulch or broadcast for weed abatement and erosion control per request of property owners.

The Chipping Program will involve Mariposa County Fire, CalFire, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Mariposa County OES, Mariposa Public Utilities District, Southern Sierra Mi-Wuk Nation, Mariposa Resource Conservation District, U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service, Upper Merced River Watershed Council, Mariposa County High School ROP Fire Technology Class Grizzlies Fire Department, SouthWest Interface Team (SWIFT) and private landowners.

The Chipping Program project area affects the Chowchilla River, North & South Fork Merced River and Fresno River watersheds, including the watersheds of numerous lakes, reservoirs, creeks, gulches and meadows (please see complete list and maps following PROJECT PROPOSAL.) The project area has a history of extreme fire behavior. Heavy fuel loading and steep terrain combine to create a condition under which fires in the area have a rapid rate of spread and burn at very high intensity, therefore severely damaging soils. This is supported by recent fire history (1996 Stumpfield Fire, 1961 Harlow Fire, 1962 Timberlodge Fire and 1959 & 1968 Nelson Cove Fires.) We cannot immediately affect climate or topography, therefore treating fuels is essential to prevent large and damaging wildland fires. Fuel treatment, when done properly, is also the most effective way to improve and protect our watersheds. Modifying, reducing and removing hazardous fuels increases the quantity and quality of water available, while decreasing the likelihood of occurrence of large and damaging wildland fires, which lead to soil damage, erosion and runoff into creeks, streams, rivers and lakes. Another benefit of proper fuel treatment is significant improvement in wildlife habitat. As a result of this project the Chowchilla River, North & South Fork Merced River and Fresno River watersheds will be less vulnerable to soil damage and erosion caused by large, high intensity wildfires, with outcomes from fuel treatment including increased quality and quantity of water available in the watersheds, improvement of wildlife habitat and improved forage for grazing.

Second to completion of our countywide CCWPP (Community Conservation and Wildfire Protection Plan) this Chipping Program is our highest priority, and in action the program will continue to improve quality of life for our residents and visitors as well as improve the health of the Sierra Nevada watershed in which we live.